



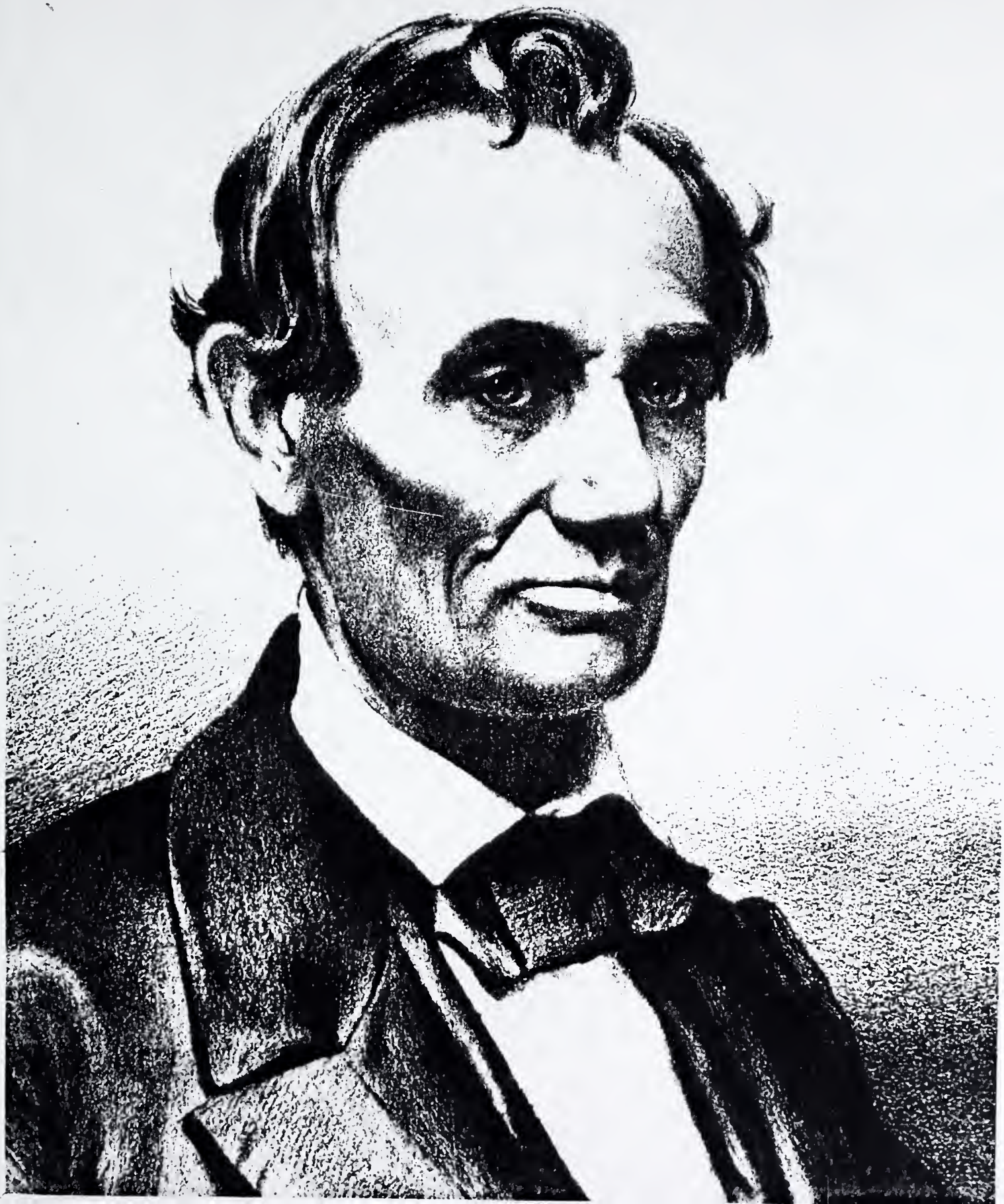
Artists of Abraham Lincoln portraits


Thomas M. Johnston

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

PHOTOCOPY
(original in safe)





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PHOTOCOPY
(original in safe)



PHOTOCOPY
(original in safe)

Springfield, Ill. July 18th 1860,

Dear Brainerd,

I arrived here at five o'clock to day, and proceeded to once to Mr. Lincoln's not finding him at his ~~off~~ home, I went to his office where I had ~~a short~~ the pleasure of a short interview him. He seemed very much engaged but I am happy to say expressed himself much pleased to see me and consented to sit to me for his portrait without the least hesitation. I will commence tomorrow at half past seven.

More anon. With my best regards,
to your family and my friends,
I remain

Yours truly

Thos M. Johnston

Ch Brainerd Esq.

Boston, July 26, 1860

Dear Johnston,

Yours of the 20th came to hand last evening.

I am delighted to learn that you are sanguine of your success in making a good picture of Lincoln. I hope that it will be not only a characteristic likeness but a pleasing picture. All the pictures that have yet been issued leave an unfavorable impression upon the minds of the spectators. I feel quite confident that your picture will be the picture of the man!

I have been at work all the morning to raise some money to send you, but my success has been very slight. I have a promise of a small sum at noon, and if I get it I will enclose it. In case I should fail to send you all you need you must not hesitate to call on McFally & Co. of Chicago, who will advance you enough to get home. As I wrote you in a former letter they have offered to do all in their power to assist you in displaying the picture. I have left with them nearly 1,000 small portraits of Douglas which they will deem good collateral for a small advance.

I think I never knew business so dull as it has been for the last two weeks. The picture buyers must be dead or out of town, for no pictures are called for. Business must revive before long.

The "Free", which I send you with this, copies the notice from the "Transcript" of last evening. (July 26, 1860)

I suppose you will be nearly ready to leave for Chicago by the time this reaches you.

"G.L." saw Barry's portrait this morning for the first time, and thought it very bad. He thinks the lithograph fails to do justice to the crayon.

Don't forget to get all the testimonials you can as to the accuracy, etc. of your portrait. "We must keep blowing" and thus make the public shell out. I feel certain that everybody will be clamorous for the picture, and it is next they should be, considering how much we have staked upon it.

Of course you will let the Springfield editors see the picture, and get them to notice it. Please be particular to forward the notices, that I may have them copied here.

I think I had better get a frame ready for the picture. In your reply to this please tell me if I shall have an oval or a square panel.

I just called to see your father and found him laying himself out on a large sheet of paper, which you will probably receive with this. The old gentleman is in great spirits, and thinks you will make a tremendous hit. His eyes actually sparkled and moistened with delight.

Faithfully Yours

C.H. Brainard

P.S. Please get a signature of Mr. Lincoln to be transferred to the stone, and about a dozen of his autographs for distribution amongst autograph collectors.

When you get to Chicago you had better ascertain how long it will take you to reach N.Y. deducting one day at Niagara Falls. I want to arrange matters so that I can meet you at N.Y. on the Monday morning of or after your arrival there, and be prepared to return to Boston the same evening.

Mem. Greater than Moses, who brought water from a rock, I extract money from Lithographic Stones, and enclose Ten dollars.

FIRST PORTRAIT OF LINCOLN WAS PAINTED BY JOHNSTON OF BOSTON

From This Were Made the Lithographs Used in His First Campaign
For the Presidency *Boston Herald*
7-6-7-1932





By A. J. PHILPOTT

The first artist to make a portrait of Lincoln from life, after his nomination for the Presidency in 1860, was a young Boston portrait painter named Thomas M. Johnston, who had been sent to Springfield, Ill. for that purpose, in July of that year.

Thomas M. Johnston was about 24 years of age at the time, but was already well known as a portrait painter in Boston—more especially as a portrait artist in crayon and charcoal. He had the faculty of sketching quickly and getting a characteristic likeness.

He was one of a family of artists—father, mother, brother and sisters, all were artists. He was the son of the famous illustrator and caricaturist, David Claypoole Johnston, a remarkably versatile genius, and known in the 40s of the last century as "the American Cruikshank."

Aside from the training he got from his father, Thomas M. Johnston also studied with Samuel Rowse, the best crayon portrait artist of his time—and also a great lithographic draftsman—and with William Morris Hunt, who was generally regarded as the foremost painter in America during the middle period of the last century.

"Tom" Johnston was a great favorite with Hunt, as were his brother,

John B. Johnston (landscape and cattle painter) and his sister, Sarah J. T. Johnston.

Never "Sat" Before

It was an enterprising Boston lithographic publisher—C. H. Brainard—who sent Tom Johnston to Springfield, Ill. in July, 1860, armed with the necessary letters of introduction, in the hope that the candidate of the Republican party, Abraham Lincoln, would sit for his portrait, which could be reproduced on a lithographic stone for use in the strenuous election campaign of that year.

Up to that time, Lincoln had never "sat" for an artist. The nearest he had come to it was when in April, 1860, he permitted Leonard Volk in Chicago to make a life mask of his face and hands. At that time he told Mr. Volk that he had never sat for an artist, although he had sat for a great many photographers.

It was during his visit to New York the previous year, to deliver the famous Cooper Union speech, that he sat for the photographer Brady, the first time. Afterwards, Brady made some 20 negatives of Lincoln.

So Thomas M. Johnston was the first to make a portrait from life of Lincoln, and he was eminently successful. From this he made the first lithograph of Lincoln for C. H. Brainard.

For the first time the public-at-large got a correct idea of the features of the man who had been chosen by the Republican party as its standard bearer.

First Correct Likeness

Prior to that, most of the pictures of Lincoln that had appeared in illustrated papers were at best caricatures. This was the first time—when the lithographs were spread abroad through the North and West—that the public had been privileged to see the correct features of the thoughtful man who was to lead the country through a great civil war.

Thomas M. Johnston wrote to his father at the time which show how the young Boston artist felt after he met Lincoln, and while making the portrait.

These letters are in the possession of Rev. Fr. Richard S. Cartwright of St. Paul's College, Washington, D. C. He is a nephew of Tom Johnston. And it is through his courtesy the Globe is permitted to reproduce the letters and that first lithograph which Tom Johnston made of Lincoln.

The first letter is brief, but joyful. "Springfield, Ill., July 19, 1860.

"Dear Father:

"I saw Mr. Lincoln soon after my arrival. He had hardly read one letter before he consented to sit, and appointed tomorrow morning for the first sitting.

"Your affectionate son,

"Thos. M. Johnston."

One can imagine the joy of the father, David C. Johnston, on receiving that brief note.

Found His Face "Beautiful"

The second letter tells of the artist's surprise at finding Lincoln's face "beautiful in the extreme." The letter also reflects the general idea of the public at the time about Lincoln's "homeliness." It was written immediately after the first sitting while he was still under the influence of his artistic emotion.

"Springfield, July 20, 1860.

"Dear father:

"Mr. Lincoln sat today by appointment at his office, which makes a fine studio.

"Mr. Lincoln is a very tall, awkward-looking man, but with a face and head that I really consider beautiful in the extreme, when compared with all the pictures that have been published over his name.

"This fact is very encouraging to me. I had reason to expect to see a face that reminded one of an over-sized pear than anything else. Mr. Lincoln's title of ugly must be owing to his figure entirely.

"Tell Mr. Brainard that he can count on an attractive picture and a good likeness of Mr. Lincoln, and that I will make one, for Mr. Lincoln is a good sitter. He makes a business of it. I will go again tomorrow morning at 7:30 a. m.

"Your affectionate son,

"Thomas."

The Picture Finished

Part of the next letter is missing—probably the most interesting part.

"Springfield, Ill., July 22, 1860.

"Dear Father:

"Mr. Lincoln sat for the second time yesterday, and I have made good progress. I hope to finish it in three more sittings, for he is a first-rate sitter, and a much better looking man than I had reason to suppose him to be. His ugliness is entirely owing to his figure.

"Next Wednesday will be a great day here in consequence of the Democratic convention which meets here. The Douglas element is very strong. He will beat Lincoln."

(The rest of the letter is missing.) This picture is finished.

"Springfield, Ill., July 26, 1860.

"Dear Father:

"I leave for Chicago tonight. The picture is a decided success.

"Thomas."

The Chicago papers noticed the portrait.

"Niagara Falls, July 20, 1860.

"Dear Father:

"Inclosed you will find a notice of my portrait of Lincoln from the Chicago Daily Journal of the 27th July. The Chicago Tribune-Democrat will also notice it. The Tribune is the great Republican organ of the West. The two latter notices were to appear on the 28th July.

"Your affectionate son,

"Thos. M. Johnston."

Artist Died in Paris

It was from this painting that Thomas M. Johnston made the lithograph for C. H. Brainard, which went all through the country at the time. It is a fine drawing, full of character, clean cut and well modeled. The eyes, deep set and thoughtful, are especially

well done. Later this same year, Lincoln grew a beard.

Thomas M. Johnston also drew on stone portraits of John Howard Payne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Charles Sumner, John Brown, Wendell Phillips and William Lloyd Garrison. After a year or more he gave up lithographic work. It was too confining.

He was an excellent landscape painter as well as a portrait painter. There is an altar piece in the Church of the Immaculate Conception on Harrison av. which he painted.

After the Civil War he went to France to study and died as the result of an operation, in Paris, Feb. 28, 1869, when he was 33 years of age. He is still remembered by some of the older Boston artists as a splendid painter and a man of unblemished character.

RECEIVED
MAIL DEPARTMENT
Referred to _____
REC'D MAR 22 1938 H
Answered _____
LIFE INSURANCE CO.

Edgerly Court Apts.,
Santa Barbara, Calif.
March 14, 1938.

Lincoln Life Insurance Co.,
Ft. Wayne, Indiana.

Gentlemen;-

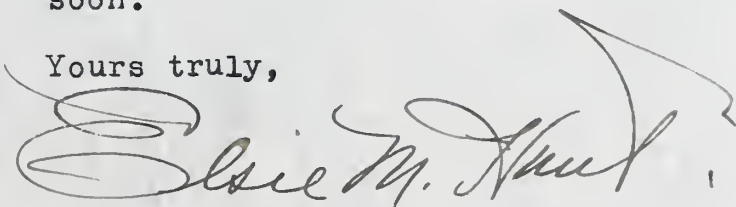
It has been suggested to me that you might be especially interested in an old etching of Abraham Lincoln, which I own and now intend to sell.

This etching is life size bust, being about 9 x 13 inches mounted on a board 18 x 20. It is in excellent condition, and is signed by T. Johnson, the English engraver (London, 1834-1904). It is a full profile, although there is another etching of Lincoln by T. Johnson in the Art Institute in Chicago, which is half-profile.

Recently I have had this inspected by several authorities, among whom were Mr. Furman and Dr. Wm. Hekking of Los Angeles. Dr. Hekking is the curator of art at the Los Angeles Museum and spoke highly of this picture as a fine piece of historical portraiture. The expression is rarely beautiful and the tone of the whole work is mellow and pleasing.

I am taking the liberty of attaching a photograph of this etching, to show you how fine the expression really is and give a better idea of it than I could in words. In case you would like to inspect it personally, I would send it to you for that purpose. I trust that I may hear from you soon.

Yours truly,



(Miss) Elsie M. Hunt.

March 29, 1938

Miss Elsie M. Hunt
Edgerly Court Apartments
Santa Barbara, California

Dear Madam:

Thank you very much for submitting to us the photograph of the excellent etching by T. Johnson.

We find that we have no less than ten of these Johnson reproductions, but none I think are as large and as fine as the one in your possession.

If you will be willing to price this, we will let you know whether or not we feel we would care to acquire it.

Very truly yours,

LAW:EB

Director

March 20, 1933

Miss Helen M. Hunt
Highly Decorated
Santa Barbara, California

Dear Helen:

Thank you very much for reference to me the
photograph of the excellent sketch by V. Johnson.
We find that we have no less than two of these
Johnson photographs, but none I think are as large and
as fine as the one in your possession.
If you will be willing to price this, we will
let you know whether or not we feel we would care to
acquire it.

Very truly yours,

Elizabeth

L.H.M.

Santa Barbara, California.
Edgerly Court Apts.,
April 11, 1938.

Lincoln National Life Foundation,
Ft. Wayne, Indiana.

Gentlemen;

Attn: Mr. Louis A. Warren.

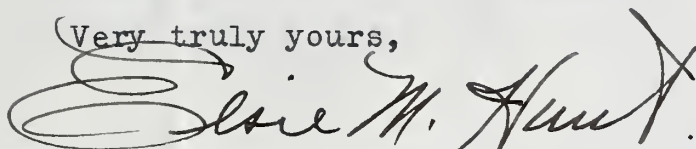
In further reference to the copy of a Lincoln etching done by T. Johnson which I submitted to you, I am indeed pleased that you appreciate this picture I own.

At present I am corresponding with a middle-west collector of Lincolniana as well as a dealer in New York, both of whom seem considerably interested, as well as numerous conversations with local peoples.

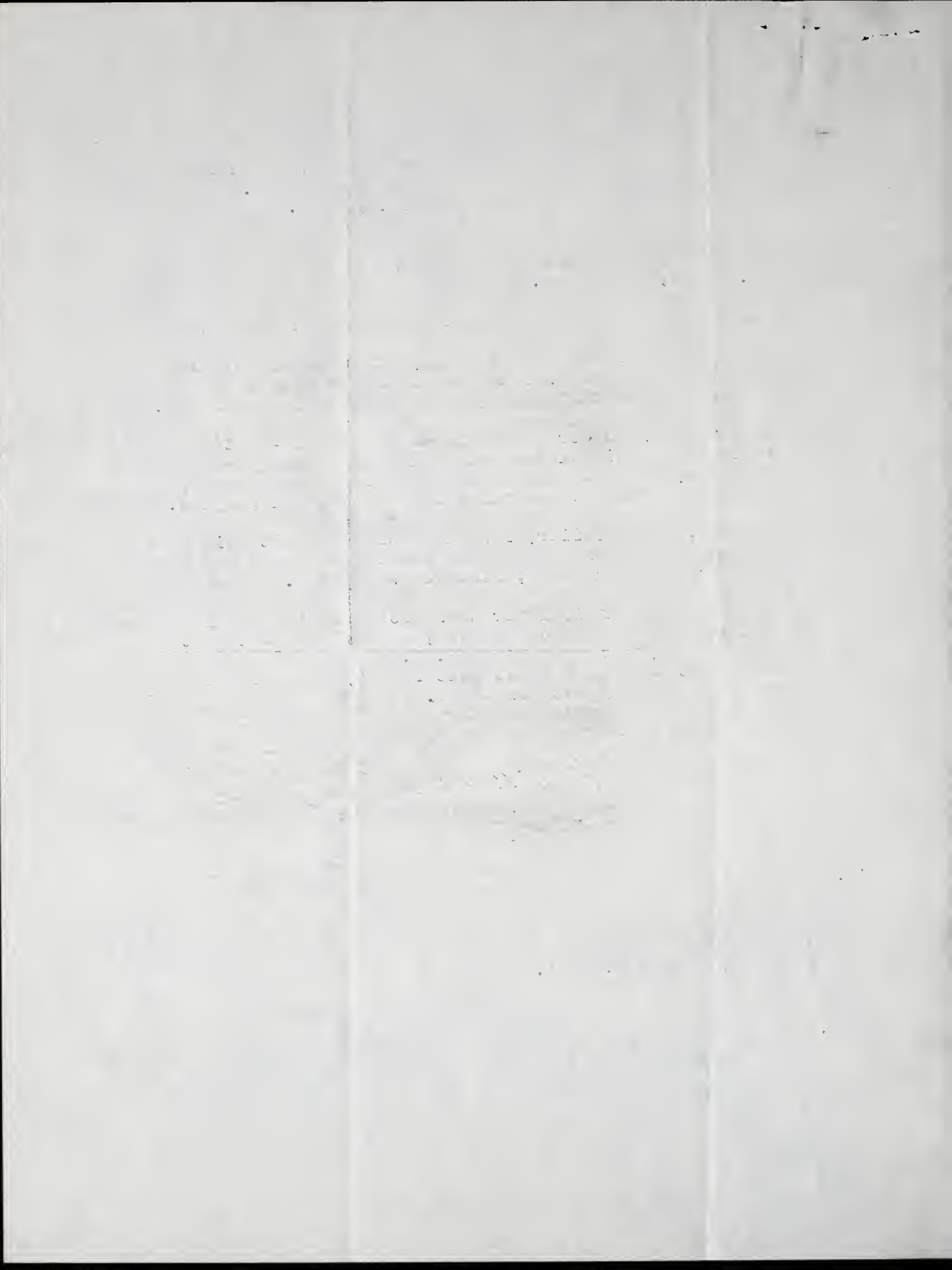
However, as a Hoosier, I would prefer that it join your gallery and remain in Indiana where I was born and have many friends, -brothers, sisters and others.

Although the sum is lower than quoted in the local gallery where it is on display, I would be willing to sell it to you for a net \$300.00. I am sure you recognize this as a reasonable figure, and I shall await your reply with interest.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Elsie M. Hunt". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

(Miss) Elsie M. Hunt.



Johnson Etching

April 18, 1933

Miss Elsie M. Hunt
Edgerly Court Apts.
Santa Barbara, Calif.

Dear Miss Hunt:

Thank you for your kindness in
writing with reference to the Johnson etching
but I do not think we would care to acquire it.

Very truly yours,

LAW:BS
L. A. Warren

Director

April 18, 1908

Wm. H. Hall, Esq.
1000 Broadway, New York
City, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Hall:

Thank you for your letter of
the 14th inst. in relation to the
above matter. I am not sure
but I do not think we would care to
accept it.

Very truly yours,

Wm. H. Hall

Wm. H. Hall
1000 Broadway

4

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MISSION OFFICE EQUIPMENT CO.

Elsie M. Hunt

Santa Barbara, California

1103 State Street

LINCOLN NATIONAL
MAIL DEPARTMENT
Referred to
REC'D MAY 25 1938 G
Answered
LIFE INSURANCE CO.

May 21, 1938.

Lincoln National Life Foundation,
Ft. Wayne, Indiana.

Gentlemen;-

Attn.Mr. L. A. Warren.

With further regard to the Lincoln etching done by T. Johnson, when you have definitely decided about making a purchase, will you be kind enough to return the photograph with cardboard on both sides to protect it. I shall be glad to send postage if you wish.

Yours truly,

Elsie M. Hunt

(Miss) Elsie M. Hunt,
Edgerly Court Apts.,

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
LIBRARY
540 EAST 57TH STREET
CHICAGO, ILL. 60637

1968

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
LIBRARY
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COLORADO LIFE COMPANY

DENVER, COLORADO

PACIFIC COAST BRANCH

220 MONTGOMERY STREET
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

May 26, 1938.

F. W. HERON
REGIONAL VICE-PRESIDENT

A. J. McAndless,
Lincoln National Life Insurance Co.,
Fort Wayne,
Indiana.

Dear Sir:-

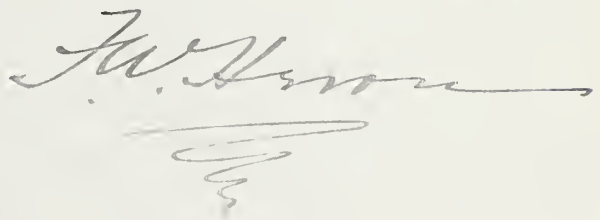
The writer enjoyed a personal acquaintanceship with Mr. Franklin B. Mead that extended over a period of twenty five years. A matter has now come up and I am therefore taking the liberty of addressing you with the hope that you will pass this letter along to the party who is in charge of the Lincoln National Life Foundation.

There has come to my attention an exceptional etching of Abraham Lincoln. The inside plate is 9 x 13 - the full size being 16 x 18. This etching was framed many years ago by a well known establishment in New York City. I am informed that it was exhibited at the Panama Pacific Exposition held in San Francisco in 1915. This remarkable likeness was etched by T. Johnson and is the most beautiful thing of its kind in existence.

The man who owns it wishes to sell it and for that reason I am writing to the Foundation in the hope that it may find a place in your extremely fine collection of Lincolniana. I will gladly do anything possible to co-operate to that end.

FWH/R

Cordially,



LINCOLN NATIONAL

Referred to _____

REC'D MAY 31 1938

Answered _____

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

N.B. We re-insure our business with you.

Yolanda Riley

June 2, 1938

Miss Elsie M. Hunt
Edgerly Court Apartments
Santa Barbara, California
My dear Madam:

Thank you very much for allowing us to see
the picture of the etching which you have for sale,
but we do not think we would care to acquire it.

We are enclosing the picture and trust that
it will reach you safely.

Very truly yours,

LAW:EB
Enc.(1)

Director

June 2, 1933

Miss Alice M. Hunt
Hollywood Court Apartments
Santa Barbara, California
My dear Madam:

Thank you very much for allowing us to see
the picture of the standing which you have for sale,
but we do not think we would care to acquire it.
We are enclosing the picture and trust that
it will reach you safely.

Very truly yours,

Director

LAV:W
Enc. (1)

JOHNSON, T.

June 2, 1938

Mr. F. W. Heron, Regional Vice Pres.
Colorado Life Company
220 Montgomery St.
San Francisco, Calif.

My dear Mr. Heron:

We are grateful indeed for your calling
to our attention the very fine Abraham Lincoln etching
by T. Johnson.

We are quite familiar indeed with this
work of art and in fact have several of the Johnson
etchings of Lincoln and copies.

I am wondering if we have not already been
in correspondence with the owner, Mr. L. C. Hunt, or
can it be that there are two identically the same
which are being offered.

If you care to have the owner give us the
price at which he is holding the etching we will let
you know whether or not we wish to acquire it although
I doubt seriously whether we will care to add it to
our collection.

Very truly yours,

LAW:PW
L.A. Warren

Director

JOHNSON, T.

June 2, 1938

Mr. W. E. Nelson, National Vice Pres.
Colorado Life Company
220 Montgomery St.
San Francisco, Calif.

My dear Mr. Nelson:

We are grateful indeed for your calling
to our attention the very fine Abraham Lincoln etching
by T. Johnson.

We are quite familiar indeed with this
work of art and in fact have several of the Johnson
etchings of Lincoln and eagles.

I am wondering if we have not already been
in correspondence with the owner, Mr. J. C. Hunt, or
can it be that there are two identically the same
which are being offered.

If you care to have the owner give us the
price at which he is holding the etching we will let
you know whether or not we wish to acquire it although
I doubt seriously whether we will care to add it to
our collection.

Very truly yours,

Director

LAW:BN
L.A. 10120

LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 913

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

October 7, 1946

THOMAS M. JOHNSON'S PORTRAIT OF LINCOLN

Three early portrait painters, Barry, Hicks and Johnson are more often mentioned than others among those who made studies of Lincoln from life during the political campaign of 1860. The work done by Barry and the sketch by Hicks have been preserved by lithographic reproductions, but the whereabouts of Johnson's effort is problematical.

Thomas M. Johnson was commissioned by C. H. Brainard, a Boston lithographer, to go to Springfield, Illinois, and make a study of the Republican nominee for the presidency. Letters which he wrote to Mr. Brainard have been preserved and likewise notes he wrote to his father about the progress of his work are available. The combined correspondence to Brainard and the elder Johnson allows us to present a fairly comprehensive story about the Springfield visit.

It will be more satisfactory to present the excerpts from the letters in chronological order and inasmuch as they were all written by Mr. Johnson from Springfield, Illinois, the place is omitted and only the date and name of addressee are preserved in the preliminaries. The closing salutations are omitted entirely.

July 18, 1860

Dear Brainard:

I arrived here at five o'clock today, and proceeded to once to Mr. Lincoln's not finding him at his home, I went to his office where I had the pleasure of a short interview (with) him. He seemed very much engaged but I am happy to say expressed himself much pleased to see me and consented to sit to me for his portrait without the least hesitation. I will commence tomorrow at half past seven.

July 19, 1860

Dear Father:

I saw Mr. Lincoln soon after my arrival. He had hardly read one letter before he consented to sit, and appointed tomorrow morning for the first sitting.

July 20, 1860

Dear Brainard:

I have not yet seen Mr. Lincoln's home except from the outside and cannot give you a glowing description of it nor its inmates. I commenced the portrait today under the most favorable circumstances. I feel sure of getting a good thing. Perhaps I shall be able to send you "an interesting letter" tomorrow I will try.

I have just 27 dollars in pocket and as my board bill will amount to about 15 dollars and my fare 3 more than I now possess, I am obliged to call on you to fill the gap.

Dear Father:

Mr. Lincoln is a very tall, awkward-looking man, but with a face and head that I really consider beautiful in the extreme, when compared with all the pictures that have been published over his name.

This fact is very encouraging to me. I had reason to expect to see a face that reminded one of an over-sized pear than anything else. Mr. Lincoln's title of ugly must be owing to his figure entirely.

July 22, 1860

Dear Brainard:

Mr. Lincoln has not yet invited me to his home, therefore I have not yet seen any of his family except himself.

I have had two satisfactory sittings from him and feel certain of being able to make a likeness that every Republican will have reason to be proud of: for I believe no man's personal appearance has been so variously

misrepresented as the Hon—Abraham Lincoln's. I was not aware that it was possible for photographs taken from life to so misrepresent the human face. The only one that gives any idea of him is the profile which I told you before I left Boston I preferred to all others: this is somewhat like him but does not do him justice. Volk's bust gives a good general idea of him but 'acks detail. Barry's original drawing is like him in very many respects but the lithograph from it is a failure.

Mr. Lincoln has a fine head and face the expression of which indicates an amiable disposition combined with great force of character. The upper part of his head is quite Websterian. Mr. Lincoln's title of "ugly" must be owing entirely to his figure and gait; the length of the former destroying to some extent the grace of the latter. I am quite well and enjoy my visit much. Please write me a long letter.

Dear Father:

Mr. Lincoln sat for the second time yesterday, and I have made good progress. I hope to finish it in three more sittings, for he is a first-rate sitter, and a much better looking man than I had reason to suppose him to be. His ugliness is entirely owing to his figure.

July 23, 1860

Dear Brainard:

I was delighted to hear from you today and hope you will write often. Mr. Lincoln sits every day early in the morning thus far I have had three sittings and the picture is nearly done. I thank you for having my way for me in Chicago. I presume I shall feel quite at home there in consequence. I am sorry that I have been unable as yet to see a copy of Mr. Hick's picture. He should have sent one to Mr. Lincoln before now: however if it is no better than Volk's bust I am not afraid of it. Mr. Lincoln and myself are good friends and get along well together. He is very much pleased with my work: he says B's lith. is a total failure: he also says that B's original drawing pleased Mrs. Lincoln better than Hick's portrait so I think I have no reason to fear Hicks. Everybody laughs at B's lith. in this city. it is very unpopular.

July 26, 1860

Dear Father:

The picture is finished. I leave for Chicago tonight. The picture is a decided success.

(end of correspondence)

From this correspondence we must conclude that Johnson made an original study of Lincoln from life which he states in one of his letters was "a decided success." We are wondering if Mr. Brainard who commissioned him to execute the portrait was of the same opinion?

Brainard brought out a lithograph of Lincoln in 1860 with the initials T. H. J. under the portrait but it is not a reproduction of a painting from life. It is a slightly retouched copy of a photograph made by a Springfield photographer by the name of C. S. German who had a studio on the State House square. It is known in the Meserve classification of Lincoln prints as number nine, and is from the same negative as the one presented to Mrs. Chapman. Apparently it was taken about the time of Johnson's visit. Johnson complains in one of his letters how "photographs taken from life misrepresent the human face," nevertheless the only contribution we have bearing his initials are retouched photographs. What became of his portrait of Abraham Lincoln made at Springfield in July, 1860?



Lincoln Lore

Bulletin of The Lincoln National Life Foundation . . . Dr. R. Gerald McMurtry, Editor
Published each month by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 1469

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

July, 1960

JOHNSTON'S "LOST" LINCOLN PORTRAIT

Following Abraham Lincoln's nomination for the presidency more than twenty artists went to Springfield, Illinois to make portraits of the Republican candidate. Some of these artists had remarkable success in portraying their subject, while others apparently met with failure because of a lack of ability or because of their inability to engage Mr. Lincoln for a series of sittings.

The published beardless portraits from life by Thomas Hicks, Charles A. Barry, Alban J. Conant, Henry J. Brown, George Frederick Wright and Thomas M. Johnston are best remembered as contributing something definite to an understanding of Lincoln's personal appearance in the presidential campaign of 1860.

But, what became of Thomas M. Johnston's portrait of Lincoln made at Springfield in July 1860? Why was a lithograph of a retouched photograph made by C. S. German in 1860 (M. No. 9), published with the initials T. M. J.? Johnston had the cooperation of the Republican candidate. His letters reveal that he was enthusiastic about his work. Did Johnston fail at the crucial moment when he had a chance to make his name immortal? Did his sponsor, C. H. Brainard, a Boston, Massachusetts lithographer, think Johnston's work unworthy of his subject?

The artist's correspondence with Brainard who commissioned the portrait, with his father who was called the "American Cruikshank" and Brainard's letter to Johnston reveal a story of a decidedly successful mission. Johnston was about twenty-four years of age at the time

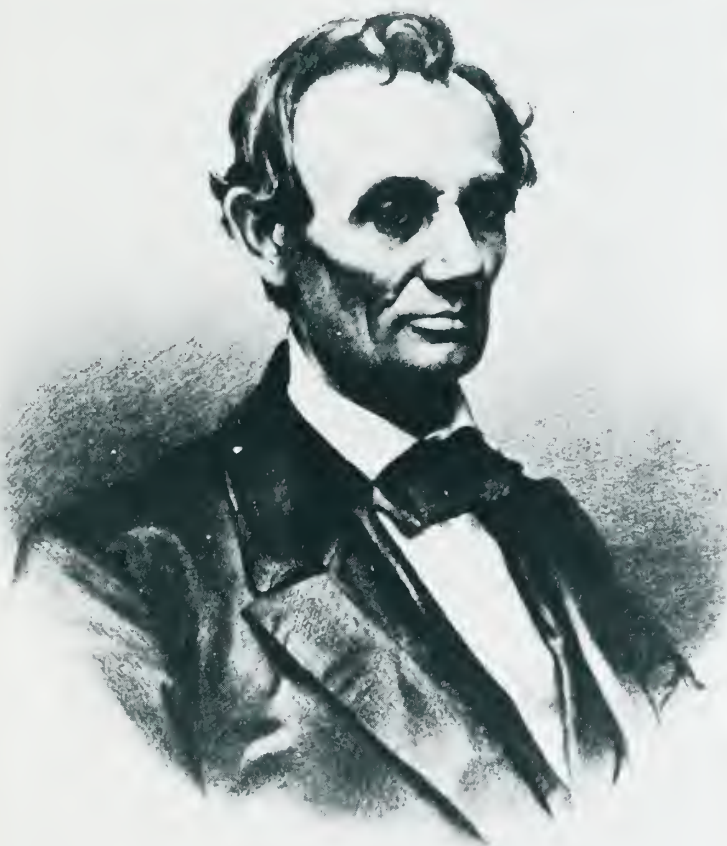
he went to Springfield. He was well known in Boston as a portrait artist who excelled in crayon and charcoal. He had the faculty of sketching quickly and getting a characteristic likeness. He was of a family of artists—

father, mother brother and sisters, were all artists. His father, David Claypole Johnston, was the famous illustrator and caricaturist.

In addition to the training Thomas M. Johnston received from his father, he also studied with Samuel Rowse, who was considered the best crayon portrait artist of his time and with William Morris Hunt, who was generally regarded as the foremost painter in America during the middle period of the last century. According to A. J. Philpott, *Boston Globe*, February 7, 1932 "Tom' Johnston was a great favorite of Hunt, as were his brother, John B. Johnston (landscape and cattle painter) and his sister, Sarah J. T. Johnston."

C. H. Brainard was the enterprising Boston lithographic publisher who sent Tom Johnston to Illinois in July of 1860 to secure Lincoln's portrait for reproduction on a lithographic stone. Brainard sensed the demands of the public for Lincoln's portrait during the forthcoming election campaign of that year.

Johnston went to Springfield with the necessary letters of introduction, in the hope that the candidate of the Republican party would sit for his portrait. This request would not be a new experience for Lincoln. The "Railsplitter" had permitted Leonard W. Volk in Chicago to make a life mask of his face and hands. Likewise, on numerous occasions Lincoln had sat for photographers. Johnston was not



The lithograph of C. S. German's slightly retouched photograph (Meserve No. 9) bearing under the left shoulder the initials T. M. J.

even the first artist for whom Lincoln had sat for a portrait. One of the earliest, if not the first portraits made of the presidential nominee from life was done by Thomas Hicks who was in Springfield working on a Lincoln portrait as early as June 12th. In fact, Hicks completed his portrait on June 13, 1860.

Apparently Charles A. Barry made the second portrait of Lincoln from life. Barry was sent to Illinois by a group of Boston citizens, including the governor of the state, to make a portrait of Lincoln. He arrived in Springfield on the last Saturday in June, 1860 and presented his letter of introduction from Governor Banks. Barry's crayon drawing has been designated as "The Greek God." It was carved on stone by J. E. Baker and lithographed by J. H. Bufford. In his correspondence with Brainard, July 23, 1860, Johnston mentioned both the Hicks and Barry portraits. It appears from the evidence available that Johnston was the third portrait artist to request of Lincoln a sitting.

Prior to the summer of 1860 most of the pictures of Lincoln that had appeared in illustrated papers were at best caricatures. Now that Lincoln was the Republican candidate for the presidency it was necessary for the public-at-large to get a correct idea of the features of the man who was variously described as ugly, grotesque and a cross between a derick and a windmill. These portrait painters who journeyed to Springfield had a real service to perform. Johnston's correspondence indicates that he had every reason to believe that his work was a "decided success." The four letters Johnston wrote to Brainard are in the manuscript collection of the Lincoln National Life Foundation.

"Springfield, Ill.
July 18th 1860

"Dear Brainard:

I arrived here at five o'clock today, and proceeded to once to Mr. Lincoln's not finding him

at his home, I went to his office where I had the pleasure of a short interview (with) him. He seemed very much engaged but I am happy to say expressed himself much pleased to see me and consented to sit to me for his portrait without the least hesitation. will commence tomorrow at half past seven. More anon. With my best regards to your family and my friends, I remain.

"Yours truly

Thos. M. Johnston"

"C. H. Brainard Esq.

Springfield, Ill. July 18th 1860,
Dear Brainard,
I arrived here
at five o'clock today, and proceed-
ed to once to Mr. Lincoln's not
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More anon With my best regard
to your family and my friends.
I remain

Yours truly

Thos M. Johnston

C. H. Brainard Esq.

Fortunately the five letters Johnston wrote to his father from Springfield are extant. As late as 1932 these letters were in the possession of Rev. Fr. Richard S. Cartwright of St. Paul's College, Washington, D. C. Father Cartwright is a nephew of Johnston. The first letter to David Claypoole Johnston follows:

"Springfield, Ill.
July 19, 1860

"Dear Father:

"I saw Mr. Lincoln soon after my arrival. He had hardly read one letter before he consented to sit, and appointed to-morrow morning for the first sitting.

"Your affectionate son
Thos. M. Johnston"

On July 20 Johnston wrote Brainard a second letter:

"Springfield
July 20th 1860

"Dear Brainard:

"I have not yet seen Mr. Lincoln's home except from the outside and cannot give you a glowing description of it nor its inmates. I commenced the portrait today under the most favorable circumstances. I feel sure of getting a good thing. Perhaps I shall be able to send you an interesting letter tomorrow I will try.

"I have just 27 dollars in pocket and as my board bill will amount to about 15 dollars and my fare 3 more than I now possess, I am obliged to call on you to fill the gap.

"Ever your friend
Thos. M. Johnston
"Please send papers."

Brainard answered this letter, a type-written copy of which is in the Foundation files:

"Boston, July 26, 1860

"Dear Johnston,

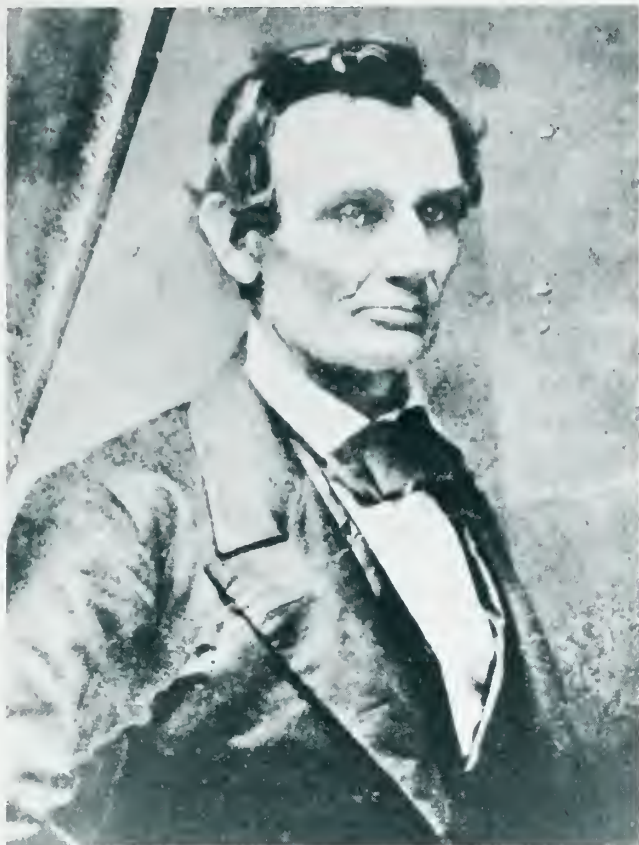
"Yours of the 20th came to hand last evening.

"I am delighted to learn that you are sanguine of your success in making a good picture of Lincoln. I hope that it will be not only a characteristic likeness but a pleasing picture. All the pictures that have yet been issued leave an unfavorable impression upon the minds of the spectators. I feel quite confident that your picture will be the picture of the man!

"I have been at work all the morning to raise some money to send you, but my success has been very slight. I have a promise of a small sum at

From the Lincoln National Life Foundation Collection

Original letter written by Thos. M. Johnston to C. H. Brainard on July 18, 1860.



A photograph of the ambrotype believed to have been made by C. S. German in Springfield in 1860 (Meserve No. 9 & Lorient No. 24). This photograph was presented by Lincoln to Harriet Chapman, Dennis Hanks' daughter, with the statement, "This is not a very good-looking picture, but it is the best that could be produced from the poor subject." This photograph became the Johnston-Brainard lithograph of 1860.

noon, and if I get it I will enclose it. In case I should fail to send you all you need you must not hesitate to call on McNally & Co. of Chicago, who will advance you enough to get home. As I wrote you in a former letter they have offered to do all in their power to assist you in displaying the picture. I have left with them nearly 1,000 small portraits of Douglas which they will deem good collateral for a small advance.

"I think I never knew business as dull as it has been for the last two weeks. The picture buyers must be dead or out of town, for no pictures are called for. Business must revive before long.

"The 'Bee', which I sent you with this, copies the notice from the 'Transcript', of last evening, (July 25, 1860).

"I suppose you will be nearly ready to leave for Chicago by the time this reaches you.

"G. T." saw Barry's portrait this morning for the first time, and thought it very bad. He thinks the lithograph fails to do justice to the crayon.

"Don't forget to get all the testimonials you can as to the accuracy, etc. of your portrait. 'We must keep blowing' and thus make the public shell out. I feel certain that everybody will be clamorous for the picture, and it is meet they should be, considering how much we staked upon it.

"Of course you will let the Springfield editors see the picture, and get them to notice it. Please be particular to forward the notices, that I may have them copied here.

"I think I had better get a frame ready for the picture. In your reply to this please tell me if I shall have an oval or a square panel.

"I just called to see your father and found him laying himself out on a large sheet of paper, which you will probably receive with this. The old gentleman is in great spirits, and thinks you will make a tremendous hit. His eyes actually sparkled and moistened with delight.

"Faithfully Yours

"C. H. Brainard

"P. S. Please get a signature of Mr. Lincoln to be transferred to the stone, and about a dozen of his autographs for distribution amongst autograph collectors.

"When you get to Chicago you had better ascertain how long it will take you to reach N. Y. deducting one day at Niagara Falls. I want to arrange matters so that I can meet you at N. Y. on the morning of or after your arrival there, and be prepared to return to Boston the same evening.

"Mem. Greater than Moses, who brought water from a rock, I extract money from Lithographic Stones, and enclose Ten dollars."

On July 20th Johnston wrote a second letter to his father:

"Springfield, July 20, 1860

"Dear father:

"Mr. Lincoln sat today by appointment at his office, which makes a fine studio.

"Mr. Lincoln is a very tall, awkward-looking man, but with a face and head that I really consider beautiful in the extreme, when compared with all the pictures that have been published over his name.

"This fact is very encouraging to me. I had reason to expect to see a face that reminded one of an over-sized pear than anything else. Mr. Lincoln's title of ugly must be owing to his figure entirely.

"Tell Mr. Brainard that he can count on an attractive picture and a good likeness of Mr. Lincoln, and that I will make one, for Mr. Lincoln is a good sitter. He makes a business of it. I will go again tomorrow morning at 7:30 a.m.

"Your affectionate son,

"Thomas."

Unfortunately a portion of Johnston's third letter to his father is missing:

"Springfield, Ill., July 22, 1860

"Dear Father:

"Mr. Lincoln sat for the second time yesterday, and I have made good progress. I hope to finish it in three more sittings, for he is a first-rate sitter, and a much better looking man than I had reason to suppose him to be. His ugliness is entirely owing to his figure.

"Next Wednesday will be a great day here in consequence of the Democratic convention which meets here. The Douglas element is very strong. He will beat Lincoln." (Remainder of letter missing).

Johnston's third letter to Brainard follows:

"Springfield, Ill. July 22, 1860

"Dear Brainard:

I wrote you immediately on my arrival here but forgot all about the telegraph. How I overlooked this is more than I can comprehend and feel much ashamed of myself in consequence.

"Mr. Lincoln has not yet invited me to his home, therefore I have not yet seen any of his family except himself.

"I have had two satisfactory sittings from him and feel certain of being able to make a likeness that every Republican will have reason to be proud of: for I believe no man's personal appearance has been so variously misrepresented as the Hon-Abraham Lincoln's. I was not aware that it was possible for photographs taken from life to so misrepresent the human face. The only one that gives any idea of him is the profile which I told you before I left Boston. I preferred to all others: this is somewhat like him but does not do him justice. Volk's bust gives a good general idea of him but lacks detail. Barry's original drawing is like him in very many respects but the lithograph from it is a failure.

"Mr. Lincoln has a fine head and face the expression of which indicates an amiable disposition combined with great force of character. The upper part of his head is quite Websterian. Mr. Lincoln's title of 'Ugly' must be owing entirely to his figure and gait; the length of the former destroying to some extent the grace of the latter. I am quite well and enjoy my visit much. Please write me a long letter.

"Your friend

"Thos. M. Johnston.

"P. S.—By the time you receive this, the picture will be almost done perhaps finished entirely. No I am wrong: what I mean to say is that the picture will probably be completed by the time I receive an answer to this provided you send by return mail."

The next day Johnston wrote his fourth letter to Brainard, prompted, perhaps, by the receipt of a letter from his correspondent. Brainard's letter, which Johnston acknowledged on July 23rd, is not known to be extant.

"Springfield July 23, 1860

"Dear Brainard

I was delighted to hear from you today and hope you will write often. Mr. Lincoln sits every day early in the morning thus far I have had three sittings and the picture is nearly done. I thank you for paving my way for me in Chicago. I presume I shall feel quite at home there in consequence. I am sorry that I have been unable as yet to see a copy of Hick's picture. He should have sent one to Mr. Lincoln before now; however if it is no better than Volk's bust I am not afraid of it. Mr. Lincoln and myself are good friends and get along well together. He is very much pleased with my work: he says B's lith. it a total failure: he also says that B's original drawing pleased Mrs. Lincoln better than Hick's portrait so I think I have no reason to fear Hicks. Everybody laughs at B's lith. in this city—it is very unpopular. That was a funny idea of Barry's that the journey would be too much for me. I felt very well when I arrived washed and brushed up at a lager beer shop near the depot left my trunks with the baggage master and proceeded at once to Mr. Lincoln's this was a few minutes past five P. M. after 36 hours of rail. I saw Mr. L. and agreed to meet him at half past seven the next morning. I then crossed the street and engaged a room in the American House, and sent for my trunk: between 5 and 6 the next morning I commenced arranging and after breakfast fulfilled my appointment. I felt quite well and have ever since I arrived. My regards to all.

"Your friend

"Johnston

"With regard to obtaining subscription money in advance all I can do is to try and that I will."

Johnston left Springfield on July 26th according to the fourth letter he wrote to his father:

"Springfield, Ill. July 26, 1860

"Dear Father:

"I leave for Chicago tonight. The picture is a decided success.

"Thomas."

The artist's promotional work in Chicago was also encouraging and the newspapers gave Johnston and his portrait some publicity. His concluding fifth letter to his father follows:

(Continued on page 4)

LINCOLN PORTRAIT COMES HOME: THOMAS JOHNSTON'S "LOST" PAINTING BACK IN U.S.

In the summer of 1860, Boston print publisher C. H. Brainard sent the young artist Thomas M. Johnston west to Springfield, Illinois, to make a portrait of the new Republican candidate for President, Abraham Lincoln. Brainard intended to enter the robust competition for Lincoln images with a distinctive lithograph based on life sittings.

When Johnston arrived in Lincoln's hometown, however, he was surprised to find he would not be the only artist undertaking such a project. Thomas Hicks of New York had preceded him, Boston's own Charles Alfred Barry had just completed a Lincoln portrait of his own, and several others were either working on life sketches or in the process of applying for sittings. Johnston had no choice but to dive into the competition and produce something unique.

In fact, he did, producing a rosebud-lipped crayon sketch that he toted back to Boston and submitted to lithographer Francis D'Avignon for adaptation. Later that summer, Brainard published the result—but apparently without much enthusiasm. In fact, only one copy of the result is known to exist, and the original crayon on which it was based long ago vanished. It is likely the result was judged a failure. Publisher Brainard spent so much money on the enterprise, and got so little financial reward in return, that he had to surrender a huge batch of prints of Lincoln's rival—Stephen A. Douglas—merely to keep his business afloat.

But only weeks later, Brainard issued a new Lincoln print portrait, based on an altogether different likeness by the same Thomas M. Johnston, to whom he apparently gave a second chance. This time, the image bore an unmistakable resemblance to an 1858 photograph of Lincoln long in circulation. However derivative this second effort, the impression was far more handsome than the first, and based on the fact that many copies have survived to the 21st century, apparently won a significant audience that campaign season. Johnston was apparently proud enough of the result to add a bold "TMJ" to the image to claim authorship.

But like the first sketch from life, Johnston's original subsequently vanished. For years, lacking knowledge of the similarly lost sketch, scholars like Stefan Lorant mistook it for the original made in Springfield. But just a few years ago, the painting made a surprise re-appearance—surfacing in a magazine illustration, where it could be seen peeking out from the wall of a U. S. ambassador's residence in Europe, where it had been sent as part of an ongoing art-loan program to our foreign embassies.



Photo by Henry F. Ballou

**Thomas M. Johnston's Lincoln—
and its temporary custodian—
at The Metropolitan Museum of Art.**

Now, at last, the painting has returned home. Its owner, Elaine Hirsch Ellis, recently brought it to Harold Holzer's office, where it now hangs while museum officials and historians consider its next destination. For the time being, Thomas M. Johnston's 1860 painting of Lincoln—perhaps not authentically from life, but certainly based in part on the artist's precious life experiences with the subject in Springfield—reposes at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, back home from its long exile abroad, and hopefully soon to find a permanent home in the country where it was produced. The mystery of the "lost" Johnston has been solved. **1**



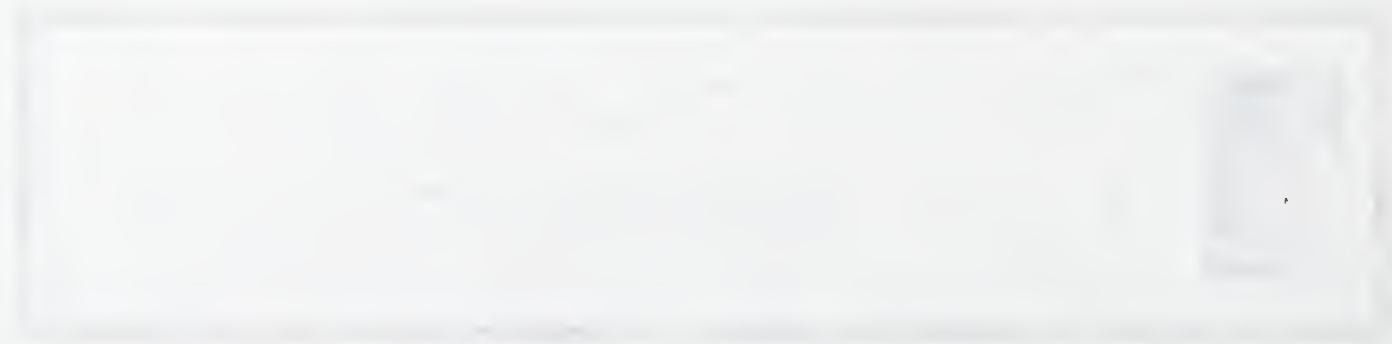
In Memory of Chuck Platt, a memorial fund has been established to promote the study of Abraham Lincoln.

If you wish to make a tax-deductible donation send to:

The Lincoln Forum Educational Fund, c/o Russell Weidman, Treasurer, The Lincoln Forum,
6009 Queenston St., Springfield, VA, 22152.

The Forum is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization; donations to the fund are tax deductible.

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